the private sector to engage in procurement of foodgrains. All controls on licensing, stock limits and movement restrictions on foodgrains have been removed by the Government vide a Central Order issued on 15-2-2002.

Purchase of Wheat by Private Traders

235. SHRI R. R GOENKA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal has been formulated to allow private traders to purchase wheat at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) from the farmers instead of waiting for the FCI to disburse the stock;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of steps taken to ensure availability of strategic buffer stocks to provide for emergencies and to ensure stability of prices, as also against any unethical practices like private hoardings etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) As per present policy of the Government foodgrains trade is free in the country and there is no restriction on the private sector to engage in procurement of foodgrains.

(c) Keeping in view requirement of foodgrains allocated under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)/other Welfare Schemes, and to meet other emergent situations Government has fixed minimum buffer norms for stocks in the Central Pool.

Foodgrains for Mid-Day-Meal Scheme

236. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether FCI was required to supply wheat and rice under the Mid-day-Meal Scheme from August, 1995 and claim payment from Ministry of Human Resource Development by submitting the bills;

(b) whether FCI had instructed its various zones to submit the bills by seventh day of the following month so as to avoid interest on food credit payable to Banks;

(c) if so, the amount paid as interest on food credit by FCI from August, 1995 to October, 2003, zone-wise and year-wise; and

(d) the action taken for causing the loss?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) The Ministry of HRD had advanced a revolving sum of Rs. 250.00 crores during December, 1996 which was increased to Rs. 300.00 crores during February, 1998 to take care of the bills delayed due to non-submission of Utilisation Certificate by the State Govts, or non-settlement of the claims after submission of bills to the Ministry of HRD.

Foodgrains for BPL families in Rajasthan

237. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) what is the present quantity of wheat and rice allocation for BPL famillies to Rajasthan;

(b) whether there has been a decline in the quantity as compared to earlier years;

(c) if so, the details for the last three years, year-wisef-

(d) whether in the past the State Government of Rajasthan had informed the Centre that the wheat and rice for BPL families were of very bad quality; and

(e) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) The present allocation to Rajasthan for BPL families is 771 tonnes rice and 66,233 tonnes of wheat per month under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) and (e) A few State Governments including Rajasthan have complained about issue of poor quality of "lustre lost" wheat under PDS. Lustre lost wheat is at par with sound wheat, so far as nutritional value is concerned. Keeping in view the reluctance of State Governments towards lustre lost wheat, its supply was stopped to State Governments from